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## AFTER THE CORONATION AT MOSCOW.

BY KARL BLIND.

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THE stiff Oriental and sacerdotal pomp of the protracted coronation ceremonies in Moscow is over. The sixteen hundred church-bells of that semi-Asiatic city no longer sound together in honor of the monarch who spent a million pounds sterling in hollow festivities. People naturally ask themselves now: What will be the future foreign and home policy of the young "Imperator"?

Under this title, Czar Nicholas II. has been crowned, or rather has crowned himself. As usual, we have heard once more on the present occasion, that Peter the Great for the first time assumed the Imperial dignity in 1721. This is an erroneous statement, however, though made by not a few distinguished historians, and repeated some years ago in Parliament by Lord Beaconsfield (then Mr. Disraeli) in one of his speeches on the Royal Titles bill. As a matter of fact, the title of "Emperor" was claimed and borne at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century by Muscovite rulers. This claim was connected with an old ambition of theirs towards the possession of Byzantium or Constantinople. Owing to the dynastic and civil wars which ravaged Russia after the death of the last descendant of Rurik, the Imperial title fell into disuse under the earlier monarchs of the new princely house of Romanoff. It was Peter I., called the Great, who resumed it in 1721. Before him, Michael Romanoff had declared himself "Autocrat of all the Russias." On this principle of arbitrary self-rule all his successors, male and female, have acted ever since.

As "Autocrat and Imperator," Nicholas II. has now been anointed, at the Cathedral of the Assumption, on the forehead, the eyelids, the nostrils, the lips, the ears, the breast, and the

head, in accordance with the proper traditions of Holy Russia. With the chrism conferred upon him he has received what is called "the seal of the gift of the Holy Ghost," being thus endowed with a kind of divine grace and a supernatural sacramental character. It is true, this holy unction has not prevented many a predecessor of his from meeting with a tragic and ghastly fate. Hence the old saying that "a Czar walks with his father's murderers before, and his own murderers behind him."

The military measures taken at Moscow for the security of the Emperor were on so gigantic a scale as to show what apprehensions had been felt in high quarters in the midst of all the gorgeous festivities. An army large enough for a great power to begin a war of first-rate magnitude with was gathered about the ancient capital, albeit its citizens are the least inclined to political opposition. Nicholas II. is a very young man, just turned twenty-eight. His reign forms, as yet, a white, unwritten page. So, at least, those say who would fain still hope for liberal measures from him. His wife, Princess Alix of Hesse—who, however, according to strict Russian dynastic customs, had to change her name into Alexandra Feodorovna, and her religion from Protestantism to that of the orthodox Eastern Church—is held to be progressively inclined. Nevertheless, such an enormous mass of soldiers were ordered to Moscow as if a foreign invasion had to be repelled by superior force.

This fact is all the more extraordinary because of late the so-called "Nihilist" conspiracies have scarcely given any sign of life. The French Republic, thanks to the new alliance between the Phrygian cap and the knout, has done its best to make its soil insecure for those who fled from the tyranny of Czardom. Among Russian exiles living at Zurich, Geneva and Lausanne, spies have latterly been introduced even in the guise of alleged lady students of the same nationality. In England alone proscribed Russians are free, and in England, partly in consequence of their contact with the quiet operation of parliamentary institutions, partly on account of a change of feeling among the cultured classes of their own country, men like Stepniak, the author of "Underground Russia" and kindred works, who once had a hand in the fierce active fight against Autocracy by all available means of irregular warfare, have gradually ceased to be connected with the organization of so-called terroristic attempts. Their London monthly

organ, *Free Russia*, shows how much they have moderated their demands. If the young Emperor would only consent to the introduction of some kind of representative Assembly, such as all European nations have, and as even the Sultan had adopted shortly before Turkey was beaten down by the armies of Alexander II., the reigning Czar would rally round him many who are at present his adversaries in what is believed to be the camp of the most extreme party.

I first met Stepniak years ago at the house of an English colonel. His profession of political faith then was that of a Republican, with strong Socialist tendencies. "Stepniak," meaning Son of the Steppe, was an assumed author's or pen-name. His real name was Kravtshinsky. He had, no doubt, dropped it on account of his former marked antecedents in what was usually called the "Nihilistic" propaganda.

That word, it may at once be explained, is a somewhat misleading one. It was conferred at first as a nickname. Afterwards it was adopted in a kind of dare-devil mood. It has covered ever since a great many varieties of political and social discontent, as well as of philosophical radicalism. There were "Nihilists" who, from the sheer hopelessness engendered by a tyranny lasting a thousand years, had come to cultivate a philosophy of despair, of disgust, and of destruction, without troubling themselves as to the constitution of the future. These were men that professed a wish to do away with all state organizations for the sake of a morbid individualism—in other words, anarchists. Others there were and are who inclined towards a socialist collectivism in a rather Utopian form. To these latter the name of Nihilist is certainly not applicable. But even men who would have been satisfied with a simple democratic—nay, with a representative—form of government under a kingly head, have often been most ignorantly dubbed Nihilists, simply because they were the resolute foes of autocratic Czardom.

On this point, Stepniak, who was personally in friendly relations with upholders of the Anarchist doctrine, such as Réclus, Krapotkin, and Malatesta, but who was far from sharing their views, wrote about two years ago :

"The so-called Nihilists are not Anarchists. Anarchy died in Russia as long ago as 1874 and was practically buried in 1877. For the last seventeen years there has not been a line published in the Anarchist interest by our

clandestine press ; not a declaration of Anarchist views has been made at any of the numerous political trials ; not a single manifestation of the existence of that party has occurred within the dominions of the Czar. There are a few Russians who hold Anarchist opinions, but they either keep quiet or come abroad to join the international movement, for there is no field for their activity in their own country. *The Russian people are struggling to obtain a constitutional government, a national parliament, representative institutions."*

For years Stepniak had repeatedly been one of the speakers on the platforms of London Socialists, who, it need not be said, are also opponents of Anarchism. Latterly, he became more and more moderate in his ideas and aims, so much so that his socialist friends occasionally were rather sore about it. In an interview with him he declared that it would be madness now to strike a blow in the old sense of the party of action. All efforts should be concentrated on getting a legislative assembly. When asked about details of the scheme he avowed that one would have to be content if a Chamber of Deputies were formed on the basis of household suffrage. When he was further asked : " But certainly you would not have an Upper House ? " he answered : " Assuredly, we shall have one. At least, that is very possible ! "

His interviewer, putting a question as to whether hereditary legislators were meant for the Upper House, Stepniak replied that there were " no men in Russia capable of being such authorities." There were large landowners, but no aristocracy possessing the same influence on the masses as in the United Kingdom. " We must, therefore, do as best we can with a Senate on the American model." To the question as to whether he would entrust the government of Russia to these two Chambers, he replied : " If Russia were as small as Great Britain, we would do so. But Russia is so large that its government must be a Federal one." In other words, he believed in the necessity of a number of Legislatures. At the same time, he distinctly acknowledged that in so compact and homogeneous a state as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland no home rule was required.

Shortly before his sudden death, Stepniak would have been satisfied with a Chamber possessing only a " consultative voice." I have gone into these details because among all Russian exiles he was the most prominent and the most active with his pen. His later views seemed to pave the way to a junction of liberal, democratic, and socialist forces. Up till then they were much

estranged from each other, though all of them aimed at the abolition of the dreary system of oppression under which the more educated classes groan, and which prevents the intellectual standard of the peasantry—the immense mass of the Russian nation—being raised from its degraded condition.

The present time would certainly seem to be the psychological moment for a young monarch to lift the “intelligence” of the country—as the Russian phrase is for the best progressive element of the population—from the Slough of Despond into which it has fallen through hopes of amelioration being ever deferred. In the interest of the personal security of the wearer of the crown himself, it would be advisable to satisfy and quiet those aspirations by admitting their upholders to a share in the government. In a palace revolution Paul I., the mad tyrant, was battered down and strangled. During the reign of his son, Alexander I., who at first was expected to introduce constitutional rule, dangerous conspiracies became rife after it had been seen that he, too, continued the absolutistic system. Nicholas I. had to wade to the throne through blood in 1825, when the capital, as well as some parts of the South, had become the scene of military and popular risings in favor of a constitution. The very existence of the dynasty was, at that time, for several days in grave peril. Towards the conclusion of the Crimean war, Nicholas I. died in a somewhat mysterious manner. No sooner was his life extinct than in a number of Provincial Assemblies there were mutterings and even resolutions which Alexander II. would have done well not to ignore. He did ignore them. The end was that he, who had too long played fast and loose with those who had hoped for a constitution, was torn to pieces by a dynamite bomb. The ghastly event occurred on the very eve (that is, at any rate, the semi-official version) of his intended promulgation of a parliamentary scheme. His son, Alexander III., had practically to live the life of a prisoner, mostly at Gatchina, surrounded by every possible appliance for warding off the approach of assassins. When he ventured away, the railway lines being guarded all along by troops, he yet had to fear and to experience attempts at underground explosions. His life and his consort’s life were in one instance most narrowly saved, but not without deep shock to the nervous systems of both. Might not all this have served as a lesson?

As yet it has not. More than a year and a half has Nicholas II. reigned, and no improvement of any importance is visible even in matters not affecting the the autocratic tenure of power. As a Crown Prince he was believed to have a leaning towards progressive ideas, an attitude frequently assumed by heirs-apparent, and to be friendly towards Germany, in opposition to the policy of his father and mother. It was also bruited about that, on account of his former relations with a Polish lady, he would, on his accession, make notable concessions to the Poles and stop religious persecution. In the Baltic Provinces and in Finland it was thought that he would cease continuing those violent measures of Russification against his German and Finnish subjects, which his father had introduced.

None of these hopes was realized. Things went on as usual, or even in a worse manner. The very name of Dorpat—a German name—was taken away from the ancient Baltic town and university, and replaced by the Russian name of “Jurjew.” Its university is being Russianized in its teaching staff, to the disgust of both professors and students. In religious affairs the influence of the hated reactionist, Mr. Pobedoniestcheff, remained paramount. Even the treatment of the Jews, which had aroused the indignation of the whole civilized world, at the time of Alexander III., was not altered very much for the better. When a summons was addressed to the representatives of the various religions to come to Moscow for the coronation ceremony, not only the Christian Churches, but also the Mohammedan and some pagan creeds, were included, but the Jews were pointedly left out. It is true this was also so under previous Czars. Only at the last moment, after bitter and satirical remarks had appeared in many foreign papers, this arrangement, by which more than five millions of the Czar’s subjects were designedly insulted, was amended in the present case.

Immediately after the accession of Nicholas II., I had a personal experience of the mistrust which, in spite of the more liberal reputation that surrounded his name, existed as to the character of the coming reign. I had made an inquiry, shortly before the death of Alexander III., with regard to the supposed inclinations of his heir. My correspondent, living in a part of the empire which possesses special and somewhat freer institutions than the rest of it, sent me an extensive account—by no

means of an unfavorable but rather of a moderately hopeful nature. When reading it I was somewhat puzzled at first. The whole was drawn up in such a way as to give the idea of the subject treated having not the slightest reference to political and imperial affairs, but rather to those of some private individual. However, not being unused to this sort of correspondence from olden times, I soon discovered the real meaning of the strange missive. Further news has been conveyed to me since, in the same extraordinary garb, but its contents gradually grew less and less hopeful as to the new ruler having any really liberal measures in view.

The Czar's manifesto, dealing with the remission of taxes and the mitigation of sentences pronounced upon prisoners or refugees convicted of common crimes or political deeds, has disappointed even those who had not indulged in over-great hopes. Measures of amnesty are always proclaimed at the accession or the coronation of a monarch. In the present instance the quality of mercy is exceedingly strained. The decree still leaves the political sufferers in Siberia—the victims, in many cases, of sheer administrative arbitrariness—in a most cruel condition. It does not make it possible for any noted Russian exile to return to his fatherland.

This forms a bad outlook. Such as human nature is, one cannot help thinking that, in course of time, the anger aroused by this merciless continuation of the old government practices and by the destruction of all hopes as regards the establishment of some kind of representative institutions, however moderate, will once more lead to violent acts of revenge and intimidation.

In foreign affairs the prospect is not more pleasing. The young Czar, when a Crown Prince, was supposed to entertain feelings of friendship for Germany. Since then he has married a German Princess. Yet the relations with France, which had been heralded in by the naval demonstrations at Cronstadt and Toulon, are still supposed to be such under his reign as to imbue the preachers of "revenge" at Paris with the idea that some day or other they might co-operate with the once hated Cossack. This certainly does not make for peace, nor, truth to say, for the security of the Republic. Men like Gambetta, in whom the Cæsarean vein was so strong, or General Boulanger, who was so near getting into supreme power, will always come up if the



French nation is misled into the expectation of a fresh military adventure with a strong ally at its side. There is a new Orleanist Pretender now to the fore, and the Republic had better watch him.

Though the Russian government may be in no mood to begin a war for the sake of the beautiful eyes of France, or for the object of helping her to the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, the mere fact of the closer relations between Paris and St. Petersburg perpetuates, and, so far as Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy are concerned, unfortunately necessitates, the increase of military and naval forces. It must be remembered that in Russia such increase is ordered by a stroke of the pen. In France all parties are agreed to vote anything government asks for in that direction almost without discussion. Heavy burdens are thus laid upon the populations of central and southern Europe, which are far less able to bear them than wealthier France or despotically governed Russia. Now, the never-ceasing accumulation of what in the end becomes really an easily inflammable material, constitutes a terrible peril both to the prosperity and the peace of the Continent.

The Czar is usually regarded as omnipotent in his vast Empire. Still, it stands to reason that he, too, like other arbitrary rulers, is dependent on court, military, and bureaucratic cliques which gain his ear. He cannot supervise, he cannot ordain, everything. No human frame could stand such strain. In foreign politics, more especially, the main lines of aggressive tendencies in Europe as well as in Asia have for a long time past been laid down under the predecessors of the present Autocrat. And he evidently means, or is made, to follow them, though as yet he has done so without an appeal to arms.

Constantinople and India are manifest aims and objects of Russian policy. Thanks to the imprudence with which Lord Salisbury allowed himself to be led into a trap, in the Armenian question, by Mr. de Nelidoff, the wily Russian ambassador at the Porte, England's old ally has come almost under the protection of the Czar. In the Balkan States, where Bulgaria formerly made a strong stand against Muscovite pretensions, Russia has evidently, since the assassination of Stambuloff, and since Prince Ferdinand's turn towards the Orthodox Church, recovered a good deal of ground. In Asia it has been the steady endeavor of

Russian policy since Peter I. to come nearer and nearer to India. The so-called "Last Will of Peter the Great" is a proved forgery, but the ideas contained therein have mainly guided the course of the Czars for more than a century and a half. By force and fraud and false promises made to England, whenever a new attack was prepared against one of the Central Asian Khanates, Russia has made her way gradually through an immense stretch of territory from the Caspian Sea up to, and even beyond, the frontier of Afghanistan. Ever renewed breaches of the most solemn assurances—occasionally even given to Queen Victoria by a Czar "on the word of a gentlemen"—have been the regularly recurring incidents in these modern "Alexander Expeditions" towards India. For my part I believe that in India England acts the useful part of a guardian of peace between contending races and creeds, as well as a protector of the security of the country against possible attack from the north. She has, moreover, done away, by her legislation, with some of the worst abuses which were the outgrowth of Indian superstition. She has conferred upon multitudes of Indians the boon of a better system of instruction. She has recently made also some honorable efforts in the direction of popular self-rule within her Asiatic Empire. Let the hand of England be withdrawn, and to-morrow the bitter feuds of races and religions would throw India into a sad convulsion. Then, a despotic power, detested by the best intellects in all its own chief cities, would presently step in as a conqueror, with an oppressive military organization, with a host of semi-barbarous hordes as its retinue, and with an administration more corrupt than that of any Oriental tyranny. Could progress thus be furthered?

Yet is it not strange that a fellow-exile of Alexander Herzen—who himself was a preacher of the destiny of Russia to "regenerate the corrupt blood (!) of the Germano-Romanic world"—namely, Iwan Golowin, whom I knew personally years ago, should have written the following, in his "Russia under Alexander II." (Leipzig: 1870):

"Injustice towards a ruler who has so great a task, who bears so heavy a burden, as the Emperor of All the Russias, would be unpardonable, even for an exile . . . But even if I were to say that the Emperor Alexander II. had invented the gunpowder, it would not better my position. I may, at all

events, write this : that he has only entered upon the footsteps of Alexander the Great as far as Samarcand, and that it remains reserved to Alexander IV. *to conquer India.*"

Since that was written Alexander III. has come and gone. Samarcand has long been passed. A new ruler is on the Russian throne, not called Alexander IV., but Nicholas II. That, however, as the French saying is, is merely a detail. Nay, the Russian approach to India has since then been effected also from the Pamir side ; and England has not dared to offer any opposition. In vain have there been warnings, for many years, by men who have studied the state of affairs most intimately, such as Sir Henry Rawlinson, Colonel Malleon (*"The Russo-Afghan Question, and the Invasion of India"*), Mr. Charles Marvin, and others. On their part, the most prominent Liberal and Conservative statesmen of England have too often sneered at far-seeing and monitory counsels by speaking airily of "that standing hobgoblin of Russia," "that political nightmare," "that terror of old women," and so forth ; meaning the possibility of a close approach to, and a final invasion of, India by the Muscovite Power. One of those statesmen, years ago, satirized the warners by telling them to "buy very large maps, in order to see how far Russia still is from the Indian frontier." To-day he could not repeat that exploded fallacy.

At Constantinople and at Sofia, at Paris and at Peking, the influence of Russia has latterly made itself felt. The relations she has now with Turkey and China are a distinct damage to the prestige of England. Even the more or less underhand, but very persistent, opposition offered by France to the maintenance of the English occupation of Egypt, has a kind of reserve support now at St. Petersburg. Time will show that, in the East, Russia and England cannot play the part of two kings at Brentford, smelling at one rose. Yet there are English Liberals who have become untrue to the traditions of their party in foreign affairs ; misguided Conservatives who have not seen, and will not see, the real aim of Russian policy in the East ; and, last but not least, ritualistic High Churchmen who dream of a "unification" of the Russian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches with their own : all of these parties constituting, so to say, a triple parallelogram of forces in favor of Muscovite aggrandizement. Thus the trend of the situation is towards the

very brink of a great danger, and those who do not live politically from hand to mouth are anxiously watching the signs at the horizon.

KARL BLIND.

*Postscript.*—On the day after the above had been sent off there came from Moscow the news of the terrible disaster which marred the coronation festivities by a loss of life equal to that of a great battle.

To those who study with an unbiased mind the reports of the ghastly Moscow “crush” and “rout,” there is something unspeakably painful in the description of the brutishness and the callousness of the masses of besotted *mujiks*, who, for the sake of a tinsel cup, a sausage, a piece of bread, and a few sweetmeats, trampled each other to death in their hundred-thousands; the survivors coming afterwards back, in the most unconcerned manner, to continue enjoying the sorry amusements offered to them, while heaps of disfigured corpses were still lying about. Next to the horrors of this spectacle of inhumanity, the foreign observer notes the shocking contrast of the uninterrupted festivities at court. Nor can he help being disgusted by the heartless way in which the Moscow journals were made, evidently by government order, to restrict their report of the unparalleled event to a hundred words, couched in the coldest language, without a syllable of sympathetic commiseration.

The barbarousness of the condition of Russia, in spite of the outward glitter of pompous ceremonies, is thus brought home to the slowest understanding. It would be a fortunate day for a nation whose peasantry is so degraded, and whose educated classes are disinherited from all legislative representation, if at last a beginning were made with home reforms in a parliamentary sense, instead of the energy of the country being incessantly used for new territorial conquests and a policy of aggression which in the end may lead to one of those tremendous and sudden collapses not infrequent in Muscovite history. Thousands have, this time, “died for the Czar.” Let Nicholas II. beware lest, by persisting in the autocratic course of his namesake and his predecessors, he should bring danger upon the unwieldy empire and provoke for himself the fate of Alexander II.

K. B.